

Testimony for March 3, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-Committee

To: Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleishmann, and members of the Secondary Education Sub-Committee

From: Tamara Trojanowski, Youth Service Bureau Director
Town of Stratford Community Services

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concern about the Governor's proposed cuts to Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs), which play a critical role in our communities across the state and provide effective services for children, youth and families. The proposed cut will adversely impact youth services statewide and locally, destroying a safety net prevention and intervention for the most vulnerable residents.

I am first and foremost concerned with the devastating effects, both long term and short term, which the proposed deep budget cuts for YSBs will have on our precious youth and their families. There are 102 **YSBs** are funded by SDE that provide services in over **145 Connecticut communities**. YSBs reported having referred or diverted over **26,000** children and youth and in addition over **448,000** youth and parents participated in YSB Programs over the past 2 years.

I am also deeply concerned about the impact these cuts will have on the ability of YSBs to leverage additional funding. CYSA is unable to rectify how the placement of YSBs under the management of the DCF will result in greater efficiencies, cost savings, enhanced service delivery, or better outcomes in Connecticut's communities. We also fail to see evidence which supports any significant and impactful budgetary savings in the proposed budget plan.

Here, in Stratford, these cuts will reduce our capacity to provide individual and family counseling, conduct parenting and youth support groups, and implement the Juvenile Review Board. Suicide prevention activities and Mental Health/Youth Mental Health First Aid sessions will be curtailed as well. It will also be difficult to maintain our level of involvement with vital collaborations that promote school readiness, reduce disruptive school behavior, increase access to domestic violence services.

The Youth Service Bureau grant is the heart and soul of our work at the Town of Stratford Community Services. Please restore this funding to allow us to continue to meet the needs of children, youth and families.

Thank you for your consideration.